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# A LASTING PEACE

A Conversation between X. (a neutral)  
and Y. (an Englishman)

ARTHUR WILKINSON & CO.  
AGENTS, NEW YORK.

BY

G. W. PROTHERO

AUTHOR OF

*"German Policy before the War," etc*



HODDER & STOUGHTON

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TORONTO

MCMXVII.

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*A Conversation between X. (a neutral)  
and Y. (an Englishman).*

X. Let me ask you two questions : Why the Allies reject the proposal to make peace at once? And secondly : Why they are unable to accept the idea of a peace without victory?

Y. These two questions are closely connected; indeed, they are the same question in two different forms. To put the answer quite simply, the Allies refuse to make peace now, because it would mean a peace *without* victory to them, but *with* victory for Germany. At the present moment Germany is undefeated, though we believe she is nearing defeat. We are not victorious, though we believe our victory is at hand. How can you expect us to give up the reward when it appears to be within our grasp?

X. But why continue the bloodshed in order to obtain a result which you allow to be uncertain? Your enemies are now willing to give you practically all you want, or, at least, all that an impartial outsider would say you are entitled to expect.

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Y. Well, heaven knows, we should all be glad to stop the bloodshed, but are the facts really as you say? Is the enemy willing to surrender his conquests, even so far as to restore pre-war conditions? We have no reason to suppose that this is the case.

We are without positive information on the subject, but all that we *do* know points to the conclusion that Germany means to keep all she can hold. The German Chancellor has told us more than once, and so late even as last June, that the terms of peace will be settled according to the war map, that is, that, generally speaking, the military *status quo* is to be maintained. Last April he declared that Belgium and Poland must be brought under German control. In September, again, he referred to this speech as still expressing his views. Prince von Bülow, ex-Chancellor, and one of the most important men in Germany, in the new edition of his book "Imperial Germany," revised since the War began, repeatedly says that Germany is entitled to guarantees in the form of large additions of territory, and he explicitly refuses to hear of giving back Alsace-Lorraine. The different parties in the Reichstag, except the Socialists, are unanimous in demanding large territorial annexations. The "intellectuals" and the great groups representing commerce and industry, in their published manifestoes, follow the same line. The leading newspapers, again excepting those of the Socialist group, are unani-

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mous in claiming the fruits of victory. In short, Germany, official and unofficial, shows no intention whatever of making such concessions as would be acceptable to us, so long as the Allies have a regiment in the field or a pound in their pockets.

Moreover, the refusal of the German Government to state any terms in answer to President Wilson's request for information shows that their terms are not such as will bear publicity at this juncture, or would be approved in the United States. To offer to negotiate on such a basis as this, when we have laid our cards on the table, while Germany keeps hers up her sleeve, would be to play the game of negotiation under a fatal handicap. Besides, to negotiate now would not only be a terrible discouragement to our troops, but it would be equivalent to a confession that our resources are exhausted, and would be a direct incentive to Germany to raise her terms.

X. But, surely, if you enter on negotiations now, the Germans will be compelled to show their hand. Some concessions they will certainly make, for it is evident that they want peace. Why not be content with what you can get and spare yourselves all the additional loss of lives and treasure?

Y. I answer : What you suggest is a compro-

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mise, and we cannot accept a compromise unless we are forced to do so.

X. I do not see why.

### *Why no Compromise.*

Y. Because, in the first place, a compromise would imply condoning the gigantic crime of forcing this war upon Europe, the invasion of Belgium, and all the hideous wrongs that have accompanied the conquest of that country, of northern France, of Serbia and Poland, the sinking of unarmed and peaceful ships, the murder of their passengers, the Armenian massacres, and all the endless tale of iniquities which we, at least, can never forget. For these crimes it would be impossible, under present military conditions, to exact any retribution or indemnity; and yet they cry aloud, not, indeed, for vengeance, but for just retribution. To right them fully is impossible. We cannot restore to life the murdered civilians of Dinant and Aerschot, or the passengers in the *Lusitania*, or Nurse Cavell, or Captain Fryatt; but neither can we pass over those deeds as if they had never been done, or desist from endeavouring to rectify them, and from taking measures to prevent their recurrence, so long as we have any strength left. What happens to a State which allows its laws to be broken with impunity and crime to go unpunished? It breaks up; anarchy takes the place of order, and civilisation perishes;

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and so it would be with a community of nations if it condoned, while it had the power to punish, such intolerable injuries as have lately been inflicted on it.

In the second place, a compromise would mean that Germany would be left in a position to renew the struggle whenever it suited her, to organise her forces for victory even more completely than before, to break up the present alliance by buying out one or other member of it, to prepare her fleets and armies for a fresh and greater effort. And she would do this with the comforting assurance that the forces of the four greatest States of Europe, outside her own League, had not only been unable to break her resistance, but had been driven to leave her in a more advantageous position than before; for, whatever concessions she might make, she would undoubtedly retain some, probably a large portion, of her gains, those, namely, which would contribute most to her future strength, and be most helpful in a further advance. The alliance which she now dominates would remain unbroken. Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria would feel that they had done right in siding with Germany, and would be bound to her more closely than ever, while Greece would lose no time in joining the League which had defied the rest of Europe. On the other hand, disappointment would prevail in the camp of the Allies; dissatisfaction, mutual distrust and recrimination would split the Alliance into

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fragments; and, with an enfeebled Europe, Germany would have in another ten or twenty years an easy task.

### *The German Character.*

X. But are not these fears exaggerated? Will not the Germans perceive the impossibility of succeeding in their attempt to dominate Europe? Surely they are sensible enough to perceive that fact, and, therefore, to abstain in future from such ambitious designs?

Y. I must venture to dissent from your conception of German character. We have come to know that character by bitter experience in these latter years. We have studied their literature, their speeches, the character and actions of their public men, and we have only too much reason to believe that the hopes you express are vain. We know their aims and ambitions; we know their capacity for framing a national ideal, and for devoting themselves wholeheartedly to its attainment; we know their wonderful power of organisation, their combination of docility and self-confidence, their unbounded belief in German Kultur. The ideal they have set before themselves is, we must allow, an inspiring one, though we believe it to be destructive to all true civilisation, to nationality and freedom. They will not abandon this ideal so easily. They might abandon it if they were really beaten and knew that they were

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beaten, but you are supposing a compromise which would imply that they are *not* beaten. They might recognise that to achieve world-domination is no easy task, but they would not have been brought to see that it is impossible. They know they have made mistakes, and to these they would attribute their partial failure. Mistakes may be rectified; and they are wonderful learners. With fuller preparation and all their experiences of this war, they will naturally think they could do better another time. We must remember how nearly they succeeded on this occasion, how close to a crushing victory they have been. Leave them any ground for hope, and they will certainly build upon it a fresh structure of ambition and of effort to gain their end.

X. Well, it may be so, but at least you will allow that your view is arguable, and that your diagnosis of German character may be incorrect.

Y. My conclusion is, of course, arguable, for nothing in the political future is certain. In politics we always have to act on probabilities, but a review of the past makes my conclusion as nearly certain as any political anticipation can be; and, since we must act on probabilities, it would be mere unintelligent optimism to adopt any other view.

X. I am not yet satisfied as to the impossi-

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bility of accepting a compromise. Let us go a little further into that question. What are the possibilities as to terms of peace?

### *The Three Solutions.*

Y. Of course, in so complicated a matter, involving nothing less than a re-constitution of Europe and affecting also other parts of the world, infinite gradations in the terms of peace are possible. We cannot go far into details, but, roughly speaking, there are three possible solutions. First, what we may call the German solution—a peace based on present military conditions, involving some concessions, but retaining the present features of the War Map in a greater or less degree—in short, a compromise. This would be the result of a peace *now*. It would be a peace with victory—for Germany. Secondly, a return to pre-war political conditions. This would be a peace without victory for either side. Thirdly, acceptance of the Allies' terms, as stated in their answer to the President, or something resembling them. This would be a peace with victory—for the Allies. Let us look at these three solutions in order, and examine their probable results.

#### (1) *Possible German Concessions.*

First, then, as to the German solution. What are the concessions that Germany might be induced to grant? It will simplify our ideas if we divide the possible concessions into three

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groups—the Eastern, the South-Eastern, and the Western. This grouping arises naturally from the facts of the case, and it corresponds to the existence in Germany of two schools of political thought, apparent to close observers before the war, and more obvious since, both in the alternations of German strategy and in their utterances respecting terms of peace. Of course there are extremists like Count Reventlow, who loudly proclaim their intention of keeping all their conquests both East and West. They would establish Germany in an absolutely secure position against all possible opponents, and would extend her control not only over Eastern and Western Europe, but over a great part of Asia as well. This is, of course, the fully-developed Pan-German plan, which some chauvinists in Germany still think it possible to realise at once as the outcome of the present war. It would be interesting to examine in detail the views of this party; but, as it is clear that without a crushing German victory such views could not be realised, we may dismiss them for the present.

X. In this case, is it worth while to mention them at all?

Y. Yes, it is worth while, because such utterances, even the most extravagant, indicate ideals which may one day be realised, and to the realisation of which the conquests already made

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by Germany will conduce. We must remember that the full Pan-German scheme, grandiose as it is, is not in itself absurd or impracticable. It is not only a logical and a feasible plan, but it is one towards which they have already made a great advance. It would be quite possible for them to give up part of their conquests while keeping enough to make the attainment of the whole only a question of time and determination. Supposing, then, that they are ready to abandon part of their conquests, the question arises what parts might be abandoned. On this point the Eastern and the Western schools are in conflict.

The Easterners, who regard expansion towards the East and South-East as the primary aim of German policy, who dread, or pretend to dread, Russia as the great menace to Germany, who have their eyes fixed on Constantinople and the Bagdad Railway—these men would be ready, in order to retain their Eastern and South-Eastern conquests, to give up Belgium and Northern France, insisting only on certain strategic rectifications of frontier in the West. Of these men, Prince von Bülow is, perhaps, the chief; Hans Delbrück, a very important publicist, seems to adopt similar views; the great bankers and others, who see unlimited possibilities for the lucrative employment of capital in the Balkans and in Western Asia, take the same side. To abandon their Western conquests would, they think, buy off

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the opposition of the Western Allies, and at the same time conciliate neutral feeling.

The Westerners, on the other hand, who are not afraid of Russia, but regard England as the great enemy, would cling at all costs to Belgium and the North-western French coast, feeling that, if they could be in a position to threaten England and to overrun France at any moment, they could revive their advance in the South-East whenever they pleased. Admiral von Tirpitz and the Navy League are strong supporters of this policy; so also are the Colonial Party and the great manufacturers of Westphalia, who find the natural exit for their overseas trade in the North Sea. In fact, all those who believe that "the future of Germany lies upon the water," in the Kaiser's phrase, would cling to their Western conquests, especially Antwerp and the Flemish coast.

Now, even if we leave the extremists out of account, there is no probability whatever that Germany, entering a Peace Conference in the present state of things, would go beyond making one or other of these groups of concessions. She would certainly not make all three. She might abandon either Belgium and Northern France, or Poland and Curland, or Serbia, Montenegro and Wallachia; she would not dream of abandoning all these conquests at once. Why on earth should she? She is not beaten yet. She holds these conquests still, and would make full use of the principle *Beati possidentes*.

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### *Results of a Compromise.*

Now, in whichever way a compromise of this sort were made, what would be the inevitable result? The first result would be that Germany would drive a wedge into the hostile alliance, which it would be unable to resist. If satisfaction were given to England and France in the West, so far as evacuation of the occupied territory is concerned, and if, further, the Trentino were abandoned to Italy, while the Eastern and South-Eastern conquests were in some way or other retained, how would Russia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Rumania fare? Serbia and Montenegro would cease to exist. Russia and Rumania, losing large territories and all chance of influence in the Balkans, would be permanently alienated from the Western Powers and driven sooner or later to enter the German camp. If, on the other hand, Germany and Austria-Hungary agreed to withdraw in the East and South-East, while retaining their conquests in the West, England and France would be permanently alienated from their Eastern Allies. In either case the Alliance would cease to exist; and this result was probably the first aim of Germany in proposing a Peace Conference at this stage.

Apart from this difficulty (though, indeed, it is an insuperable objection to any compromise), what would be the political result of leaving Germany in possession of any of its

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conquests, in the East, the South-East, or the West? Suppose, first, that Germany retained the conquered parts of Russia, Curland, and the Baltic Coast up to, and perhaps including, Riga, and made Russian Poland an autonomous kingdom, as she has proclaimed her intention of doing. Russia would be left in a defenceless condition. Strategically, the loss would be fatal, for Germany would take care to secure an impregnable line of defence. The new kingdom of Poland, which it is proposed to put under a German or an Austrian prince, would inevitably gravitate to the Central Powers and be absorbed in the German Zollverein; and economical absorption would lead on to political. We must remember that the Central Powers have no intention whatever of releasing the Polish provinces—Posen and Galicia—which now form part of their dominions. These are to remain as they were. Such a result would be intolerable for Russia, and would leave Germany free to pursue her machinations in the Balkans unchecked.

Suppose, next, that Germany retained the advantages she has won in the South-East. The destruction of Serbia, the annexation of Montenegro and the greater part of Albania, as well as of Wallachia, the enormous additions to Bulgaria and her alliance with the Central Powers, would make those powers dominant in the Balkans and would mean also the absorption of Turkey into the Central-European system. From Constantinople eastward, German influence

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would be extended by the Bagdad Railway and its branches over Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, over Syria and Palestine; and British hold on Egypt and India would be gravely imperilled. It would be in the power of Germany, whenever she felt ready for a new advance, to deal a deadly blow at the British Empire in its most vulnerable parts. German writers like Paul Rohrbach, Reventlow, and many others, make no secret of the fact that this is their principal aim in the *Drang nach Osten*—the eastward expansion of Germany. And what would become of the principle of nationality, which the President, agreeing in this with the Allies, adopts as the governing principle in the reconstruction of Europe? It would be violated in Poland, in Serbia, and Montenegro, in Macedonia and Rumania—in short, all along the line. A compromise of this sort is evidently inadmissible.

There remains the third possible compromise. Suppose that Germany consented to give up her conquests in the East and South-East, but retained those in the West, at all events her hold on Belgium, with a rectification (for strategic purposes) of the French frontier. What would be the result? In the first place, France, surrounded on two sides by the German Empire, would be helpless before the advance<sup>a</sup> of the German armies. Next, Antwerp would become what Napoleon called it—a pistol pointed at the heart of England; and Zeebrugge, already

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a great submarine depôt, would be little less important. I need hardly point out that, with Belgium in German hands, Calais, Boulogne, and even Havre, would hardly be tenable in the event of war. Antwerp could easily be made an impregnable fortress. The Dutch would be forced to abandon their hold on the Scheldt and probably on Flushing as well, and to allow free passage for German ships of war and commerce up and down the river. The mouth of the Scheldt would be converted into another and a stronger Wilhelmshaven, a great military harbour within 80 miles of the mouth of the Thames.

Nor would the expansion of Germany stop there. Holland, thus encircled by German territory would, even if she did not in theory lose her independence, inevitably become, to all intents and purposes, part of the German Empire. Rotterdam would soon be as much a German port as Antwerp. Denmark would probably have to follow suit; Norway and Sweden and Switzerland would be practically helpless before such a power. The principle of nationality would be violated not only by the conquest of Belgium, but by the practical absorption of the other small States.

It is obvious, then, that to leave Germany in possession of Belgium would be fatal to the security of France and Great Britain; and I lay stress upon this fact, because the first duty of any State is self-preservation—the safe-guarding

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of its own independence, without which it can do nothing to protect its honour or the interests of its weaker friends and neighbours. But, quite apart from this, it is equally clear that we could not, while we have breath in our bodies, abandon the cause of Belgian independence, which we are bound in honour to defend, and for the sake of which we entered on this war. It was not only the prime cause, but, at the outset, the sole cause, for which we elected to fight. It was the cause which united the whole nation, without respect of creed or party, in one solid resolve. Our national honour was involved; we could do naught else.

The German attack on Belgium, apart from the atrocities which accompanied it, was as flagrant a violation of national rights and international law, of common justice and the dictates of humanity, as has ever been committed in the history of the world. It is a test case, not for us only, but for all mankind. To condone such a wrong, to leave the plunder in the hands of the criminal, would be fatal to the honour and to the interests, not of Great Britain only, but of all her Allies. Even neutral States—such at least as are in a position to resist—if they consented to such a failure of justice, would be participants in the crime. The whole world may be thankful that the most powerful neutral, the United States, has now come to see the necessity of intervention, and has decided to throw its moral weight and its immense resources into the

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scale. Such an addition of strength to the cause of justice and liberty will be irresistible.

### *Therefore no Compromise possible.*

I conclude, then, that none of the compromises to which I have referred would be acceptable. And I would offer these further considerations. Whichever form of compromise we adopt, there would be no hope of permanent peace in such a solution. It would merely be a truce. Armaments would be redoubled. The utmost tension would continue, and before long another war or a series of wars would break out, to end only in a crushing victory for one side or the other—the side which claims universal dominion, or the side which supports freedom and nationality. Where, again, would be the “freedom of the seas,” with Germany holding the Dutch and Flemish coasts in the hollow of her hand, and able by her influence in Denmark to close the Baltic? We have seen a little lately of the way in which Germany interprets the phrase, and can guess what sort of freedom seafaring neutrals would enjoy when Germany possesses a fleet equal to the British (as she would strive to make it) and a host of U-boats, or rather submarine commerce-destroyers, as superior to those with which she began the war as a swarm of hornets is to a column of gnats hovering in the summer sun.

Lastly, what would be the fate of democracy in Europe? It would have failed—dismally

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failed—in the conflict with organised and intelligent autocracy. And it would have failed owing to the defects which seem characteristic of democracy—unpreparedness and want of foresight. Germany would have won, for I must repeat that a compromise of any sort would be a victory for Germany, even if her gains were less than I have supposed. And she would have won by virtue of the advantages which an intelligent autocracy can offer—because she was organised and ready, and the Allies were not. She won in the first fifteen months of war; the Battle of the Marne merely prevented her victory from being crushing and complete; and we have been trying ever since, so far without much success, to undo the results of those early victories. Democracy might retain the sympathies of all lovers of liberty as the best method of domestic government, but it would have shown itself to be a system unable to save the State from loss or even from destruction.

### *Autocracy v. Democracy.*

X. But is this conclusion so sure? Germany, after all, is constitutionally governed, while Russia, your Ally, was, till the other day, an autocracy. How, then, can you talk of the war as a conflict between autocracy and democracy?

Y. The objection is fair, but I think it can be easily answered. It is true that Germany is constitutionally governed, but her constitution is far from being democratic, or what we should

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call politically free. In regard to foreign policy, and in regard to peace and war, the German Emperor is independent of parliamentary control. He is "Kriegsherr" (Commander-in-Chief), and has absolute control of the fleet. His Ministers are not responsible to Parliament, but to him. To all intents and purposes, therefore, so far at least as its relations with other countries are concerned, the government of Germany is autocratic. On the other side, Russia was, no doubt, for the first two years of the war, an autocracy, though she had already made large advances towards democratic government, and, considering her established constitution and her Duma, could hardly be said to be more autocratically governed than Germany. But, even granting this, my statement holds good. For, in the first place, the Allied States, with the exception of Russia, were, from the outset, democratic; and the fact that autocratic Russia was a member of the Alliance would not have precluded us from saying, even in 1914, that the future of democracy was involved in its success. And, secondly, you will observe that I described the conflict as one between democracy, on the one side, and "organised and intelligent autocracy" on the other. Now, no one would contend that, in the matter of intelligence and organisation, the Russian autocracy could compare with the German. It was an incapable and corrupt autocracy, and, even if it did not contemplate treachery to the State and its Allies, showed a lamentable want of

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efficiency in the conduct of the war. Hence its fall. But, in comparing the respective merits of two forms of government, you must take the best types of each. If you are pleading the cause of democracy, you will not allow your opponent to take Mexico as a type; you will refer to the United States, or France, or the British Empire. Similarly, in estimating the value of autocracy, you must take Germany as an example of autocracy at its best. I repeat, then, that this war is a critical test of what democracy and autocracy, each taken at its best, can do to save and to advance the State in an hour of supreme trial. I do not say that the victory of Germany would prove autocracy to be the best form of government in the long run, or in all circumstances—far from it—but I do say, that it would prove autocracy to be, at a time when the very existence of the State is in jeopardy, a far more efficient form of government than democracy. And the cause of political liberty would suffer from such a verdict, not in the defeated countries only, but throughout the world.

X. But would not the future of democracy and the peace of the world be secured by a solution which gave victory to neither side? This, it has been said on high authority, is the only sort of peace which the United States could endorse.

### *(2) Return to Pre-war Conditions.*

Y. Your question brings us to the second of

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the three possible solutions I laid down just now, namely, a return to the condition of things which existed before the war. Now, this would be, no doubt, in a sense, a desirable solution. It would be desirable for the Allies, because it would mean the defeat of the soaring ambitions nourished by the monarchs and the governing classes of the Central Powers. They would, at least, have failed in their effort to establish a world dominion; and the consequences of failure might recoil on their heads. But it would be anything but satisfactory to the people of Germany, and still less to their rulers. How could it be anything but profoundly unsatisfactory to Germany and Austria-Hungary, not to mention their Allies, to have suffered such losses of men and treasure, to have gone through all the agony of such a conflict, and yet to have nothing to show for it in the end? Now the bulk of the German people have been deluded by their rulers into the belief that the war is a purely defensive war on their side. Believing this—and I have no doubt most Germans honestly believe it—they would feel entitled to large compensations, territorial and pecuniary, and would naturally claim material guarantees, not mere “scraps of paper,” to secure them against the repetition of the alleged attack. They have conquered vast territories in this war. Why should they give them up without a *quid pro quo*? On the other hand, they have lost their over-sea possessions; why should they not retain

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their European conquests, at least till they get their colonies back? In such circumstances as now exist it is ridiculous to suppose that they would accept the return to pre-war conditions without more ado. We must look facts in the face. The Germans are actually in possession of these conquered territories. There is not a man among them, except a few extreme Socialists, who would be ready to surrender their conquests without a further struggle. To do so would be to recognise defeat; and they are not yet defeated.

What then? If they will not voluntarily surrender these territories and restore Europe to its former condition, nothing but defeat or exhaustion will force them to do so. If this be true—and no one can doubt that it is true—what becomes of your “peace without victory?” If, after two and a half years of war, the war map still corresponded with the political conformation of Europe before the war began, then, indeed, the time might have come for “peace without victory,” for the result would be a stalemate which both sides might accept as final. But that is far from being the case. A return from the present state of things to what existed before the war is utterly impossible without a decisive victory for the Allies. Observe, I say “decisive,” not “crushing.” We have no wish to crush Germany. To talk of crushing a nation of seventy millions is, to begin with, absurd. We do not wish to split up

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Germany or destroy its unity or alter its internal arrangements, or to limit its honest industry and commerce, but we do wish to put an end to its aggressive tendencies, to abolish the fear of war which has overshadowed Europe for the last five-and-twenty years, to defeat once for all the German effort to create a world-empire at the point of the sword.

X. Well, granting that this result could not be achieved without victory, would it not be a fully satisfactory result? The defeat of Germany's ambitions in the present war, the sobering sense of unrequited loss, would probably tame the Germans into decent members of the great family of nations. Why, then, demand so much more? Why insist, as you do in your reply to the President, on a number of alterations in the map of Europe which will be resisted by Germany to the last? These alterations seem to many neutrals to be unnecessary; and your insistence on them will prolong the war.

### *Pre-war Conditions unsatisfactory.*

Y. I answer that we cannot be satisfied with the solution which we have just considered, because it would keep open all the questions which have disturbed Europe for the last forty years. It would leave unhealed the running sores which so long have poisoned the body politic, and it would therefore render another war or series of wars all but inevitable. Look at the question

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of Alsace-Lorraine ! Look at that of Poland ! Look at the group of problems which make up the Eastern Question—at the condition of the Balkan Peninsula, at that of the Ottoman Empire, and the constant temptation it presents to ambitious and aggressive powers, at the disturbed state of Austria-Hungary, which is a mere political name for an agglomerate of races, two of which hold down the rest by force ! Most of these problems involve breaches of the principle of nationality, a principle which has come more and more to the front during the last hundred years, and is now recognised as supplying the only safe basis on which a group of States can rest with any hope of lasting peace. Nationality is to a group of human beings what individuality is to the individual. The sense of nationality is to a nation what self-consciousness is to a man. Once it has become ingrained in a people you cannot destroy it. But you may violate it by dividing that people up or subjecting a part of it to alien rulers ; and such violations are, in our days, when the sense of nationality is more fully developed than ever before, among the most fruitful sources of international quarrels.

X. Allow me to interrupt you for a moment. You set great store by the principle of nationality, and rightly so ; but is not Great Britain itself an offender in this respect ? How about Ireland and South Africa, India, and Egypt ?

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### *Great Britain and Nationality.*

Y. That is a pertinent question, but I think I can show that the principle is not violated in any of these cases. To explain fully and to defend adequately our position with regard to each would require a very lengthy discussion. I can only answer briefly, but this much may be said, and it will be enough.

#### (a) *Ireland.*

Let us take Ireland first. We often hear, nowadays, the phrase "Ireland a nation." But Ireland is not, and never has been, a nation in the proper sense of the word—in the sense in which we use it of, say, Poland or Serbia. For more than 700 years she has been under the same crown with England; for three centuries she has been part of the "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland." She has long been on the same footing as Scotland and Wales, who are perfectly content with their position; she has her share, and more than her proper share, in the parliamentary representation of the whole. It is true that the bulk of the Irish people, anxious to manage their own affairs and insisting on their separateness from the rest of the United Kingdom, have for some time demanded the right of self-government. But it must be remembered that at least a third of the population, representing more than half the wealth and industrial prosperity of the country,

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adheres with passionate loyalty to the old connection. In spite of this difficulty and many others, little understood abroad, Parliament has now conferred on nationalist Ireland the autonomy she desires. Home Rule is on the Statute Book; the execution of the measure merely awaits the end of the war. Not content with this, some Irish demand complete separation and independence, and with this object they rebelled a year ago. But this demand we cannot concede; to break up the Empire in such a way would be suicidal. In 1861, the Northern States of the American Union refused to give way when a similar demand was made by the South, rightly conceiving that to yield the point at issue would have been to seal their own death-warrant. Yet, whatever claim Ireland has to independence could have been advanced with equal justice, and with more of legal right, on behalf of the South. In refusing independence to Ireland we are merely following the example of the United States.

### (b) *South Africa.*

To turn to South Africa. Now it may be allowed that the Dutch Boers have a strong sense of nationality, and that they are in many ways distinct from the British inhabitants of the country. But, apart from the just cause of quarrel which we had with the government of the Transvaal, two things must be remembered. First, that the Boer States in 1899 were not

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independent, but were actually subject to British sovereignty, and formed (though their situation was vaguely defined) a part of the British Empire. The Boer War was thus, in a sense, our Secession War. Secondly, we did not declare war on the Boer States, but they on us. Encouraged by the hope of German aid, and with the intention not only of gaining independence but of expelling us altogether from South Africa, they broke off the negotiations that were in progress, and invaded Natal. But within four years of our success, we voluntarily restored to the vanquished party their autonomy, with the full rights of self-government enjoyed by Canada and the other Dominions of the Crown. And what has been the result? Two years ago a small fraction of the people sought to take advantage of our difficulties, but their rebellion was easily suppressed by the South African Government, with General Botha at its head; and the very men who fifteen years back were in arms against us, are now fighting loyally shoulder to shoulder with the British troops. It does not appear that the Dutch of South Africa conceive their nationality to be violated by their incorporation as free citizens of the British Empire.

### (c) *Egypt.*

Of Egypt and India less need be said. In both countries an infinitesimal portion of the people nourishes nationalist aspirations, but the vast mass of the population is entirely devoid of

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national self-consciousness. And it must be remembered that nationality is a moral rather than a physical fact; where a people is unconscious of the community which it implies, where, in other words, it has no *sense* of nationality, nationality cannot be said to exist. Now the Egyptians have never been a nation since the days of the Pharaohs, if then; and their condition, for ages past, has been such as to prevent them from acquiring the sense. Conquered by the Saracens in the seventh century, and by the Turks in the sixteenth, they have been almost consistently badly ruled. For the first time since the days of the Roman Empire, the British occupation, beginning thirty-five years ago, gave Egypt the blessings of orderly and enlightened government. Under British guidance Egypt has made since then amazingly rapid progress in general prosperity. If we withdrew at this moment, not only would that progress cease, but Egypt would pass again under the pernicious rule of the Turk, or would become, what it has so often been before, the battle-ground and prize of the warring European nations. Does anyone in his senses wish it to succumb to either fate?

### (d) *India.*

To talk of Indian nationality is still more absurd. India is not a country, but a continent. In the vast congeries of peoples which make up its 300 millions of inhabitants, there are differences of race, language, creed, and civi-

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sation, as wide as those which separate, say, the Spaniard from the Sudanese, or the Europe of the tenth century from that of the twentieth. You might as well talk of a European as of an Indian nationality. There is no unity in India except that of the British Raj. But we have not been unmindful of the fact that eventually a sense of nationality may and should develop in our great dependency, and that it is our duty not only to govern, but also to educate towards political liberty and self-government. In this direction India has made considerable advances in recent years; and such steps, cautiously and wisely made, may ultimately lead to some form of Federal State, able to take its place among the great self-governing Dominions of the Crown. But that day, if it is ever to come, is far ahead. For the present we have shouldered "the white man's burden" in these backward portions of our Empire; and we cannot throw it off if we would. To abandon our task now would mean inevitably the return of India to a state of anarchy and internecine war, one of the first results of which would be the extinction of the so-called "nationalists" at the hands of the more war-like races, the Mahrattas, the Sikhs, or the Rajputs; and this warfare would only end, after the utter destruction of its present prosperity, in the substitution, by reconquest, of some other external control for that of Great Britain. No well-wisher of India would desire for that country so disastrous a lot.

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### *Nationality in Europe.*

Such considerations as these—which might be indefinitely expanded and strengthened—will dissipate, I venture to hope, the objection that a supporter of the British Empire has no right to come forward as a champion of oppressed nationalities. Let us now return to Europe, for it is there that the question presses for immediate solution. We are anxious, as I have said, to put an end, so far as we can, to this source of trouble at our very doors. I say, so far as we can, for there are regions in which races and nationalities are so mixed up, as, for instance, in Macedonia, that it is almost impossible to disentangle them. All we can hope to do in such cases is to come as near as possible to carrying out the principle, in the hope that, in course of time, neighbourly feeling and decent government will obliterate ancient animosities and induce a new sense of common nationality.

In the Balkans generally, the difficulty of applying the principle is great, but with firmness and goodwill there is no reason why its application should not succeed, with infinite consequences for good in a region which has long been the storm-centre of Europe. In Poland, on the contrary, the solution is comparatively simple and easy, and it is hoped that it may be attained in the peace which will end this war. The American public sympathises with the wrongs of Poland. The President has instanced her

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case as that in which the application of the principle is most obviously required. The Emperor of Russia has pledged his word to emancipate the Polish nation; and the Allies have formerly included this solution in their conditions of peace.

It is, however, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire that the problem is most acute and also most difficult of application, because it involves the disruption of a great and ancient monarchy with whose existence the interests of Germany are closely bound up. But the Austro-Hungarian problem has to be faced, because it is here that the greatest wrongs have been and still are inflicted. In that Empire the Slav nationalities are tyrannised over by the German and the Magyar. We have therefore stipulated for the emancipation of the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia, the Slovaks of Northern Hungary, the Slavs of Croatia and other districts, and their formation into independent States. If they choose ultimately to form a federation, or two or more federations, they should be at liberty to do so; that is *their* concern. But, so long as the present system exists, it is impossible. Italy also has a rightful claim against Austria on behalf of the Italians of "Italia Irredenta" living under Austrian sway; while the Trentino, which in Austrian hands dominates the Lombard plain, exposing Italy to the risk of invasion at any moment, must be restored to the country to which it rightfully belongs.

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To Rumania, Austria-Hungary should give up the three millions of Rumanians who live under the Hungarian yoke westward of the Carpathian Mountains. On the same principles the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine must be restored to France. They were torn from her in 1871 without the consent of their inhabitants, who, whether they talked French or German, are French in their characters and aspirations to the backbone.

Lastly, there is the Ottoman Empire, an anachronism and a monstrosity in Europe. The Turk came in as a conqueror some five centuries ago, and he has lived in Europe as a barbarian and a tyrant ever since, impervious to European civilisation except on its worst side. Almost all the European territories over which he once ruled have been taken from him in the last hundred years, but he still retains a foothold in one of the noblest cities of the world. In this war he has leagued himself with the supporters of despotism and the oppressors of nationality, in the hope of recovering some of his lost possessions and perpetuating his corrupt and pernicious rule. Forty years ago Mr. Gladstone declared, in a famous phrase, that it was high time that the Turk should be expelled "bag and baggage" from the lands she had devastated and despoiled. We made the mistake of saving him in 1878, but we have no intention of repeating the blunder. President Wilson has recognised the right of every great and progressive nation

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to have a free outlet to the sea when its economic life depends upon it. In placing Russia in command of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus we shall secure for her such an outlet. Nor does it appear possible to attain this end in any other way. For another Power, whether great or small, in command of the Straits, could at any moment, with the aid of modern appliances, close them to Russian ships, and thus debar Russia from the only outlet open to her for half the year.

X. All this sounds very well, but are not the changes you propose conquests on a large scale ? And, if so, is there much to choose between your aims and those of Germany ?

### *Allied Policy not one of Conquest.*

Y. I do not think that this objection can hold good for a moment. The changes in the map of Europe which we advocate are all, with the one possible exception of Constantinople, changes which would emancipate peoples or provinces now under an alien yoke. They are not conquests made by a great Power for her own ends, conquests which violate the principle of nationality. No State profits by the changes in Poland or in the Austrian Empire or in the Balkans, excepting the States which are themselves to be emancipated. The retrocession of Alsace-Lorraine would merely be the undoing of a wrong done nearly

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forty years ago, while the expulsion of the Turk from Europe would be the well-merited reward of century-old misconduct and cruelties innumerable. Our aims, therefore, cannot fairly be put in anything like the same class as those of the Central Powers.

X. How, then, do you sum up the situation?

### *Summary.*

Y. Let me put it this way : I have, I think, shown that peace made now on the basis of the war-map of to-day could not possibly embody the principles which President Wilson has stated as requisite for permanent peace. On the contrary, it would violate them by sanctioning some at least, probably a large part, of the conquests made by Germany; therefore, such a settlement would be merely a truce, teeming with the germs of future wars. In any case it would not be a peace without victory, for it would mean the victory of Germany—not perhaps such a victory as she at one time expected, but still a very real victory, which would leave her in an advantageous position for reviving her career of aggression with good hope of success. Secondly, I have shown that a peace restoring pre-war conditions would leave unsettled all the questions out of which the present war arose; that consequently war would be likely to recur as soon as the exhaustion of belligerent resources had passed away; in short, that it could not be a

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permanent peace. Moreover, to obtain even such a peace as this without the decisive defeat of Germany is evidently out of the question. Lastly, I have shown that a peace based on the conditions set forth by the Allies is the only sort of peace which has a chance of being permanent, because it would heal those sores in the body politic which are the germ of future wars and would apply those principles which are recognised as necessary for permanent peace.

X. But would not such a solution be objectionable, as the President has indicated, on the ground that it would leave great soreness behind, a sense of injury and wounded pride, which would force a high-spirited nation to resolve on revenge and strain every nerve in order to renew the struggle ?

Y. I answer that this depends on the conditions imposed. The conditions we propose would, it is true, entail the disruption of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the overthrow of Turkey, the two chief Allies of Germany; but both these States have become anachronisms, and Austria-Hungary in particular embodies the most flagrant violations of the principles of nationality that are to be found in the modern world. But to Germany herself we desire to do no violence beyond the retrocession of Alsace-Lorraine, and the surrender of Prussian Poland in order to form an independent Polish Kingdom. As I have

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already said, we have no wish to impose on Germany such conditions as Napoleon imposed on Prussia in 1807. Germany would remain a great and potent nation, possibly even stronger than before if the German parts of Austria should gravitate, as they well might do, towards the German Empire. She would still be free to develop her industry and commerce on peaceful lines, and would be able, as before, to play a leading part on the political stage of the world. Why should such a solution leave behind it a permanent sense of soreness or desire of revenge ?

### *The Verdict of History.*

What is the verdict of history as shown by earlier wars and pacifications ? In theory, a peace without victory sounds well ; but, as a matter of historical fact, permanent peace has never resulted from such a conclusion to a great war. Take the wars fought in opposition to Louis XIV.'s attempt to dominate Europe. One after another these wars recurred for some fifty years ; and, none of them having been really decisive, it was not until 1713 that the Peace of Utrecht finally settled the question by the defeat of France. Take again the War of the Austrian Succession, which began in 1740 and ended in a sort of draw. The Peace of 1748 was merely a truce ; it led on to the Seven Years' War, which ended in 1763 with the defeat of France and Austria, and with the final triumph of Frederick the Great in Europe and of England

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in India and the New World. Take, finally, the wars against the French Revolution and Napoleon. Coalition after coalition was formed and broke up without reaching a definite settlement. The Peace of Amiens in 1803 was merely a truce between the two chief opponents—England and France. It was not till after the Battles of Leipzig and Waterloo and the complete defeat of France that a settlement was reached in the Peace of 1815, which gave Europe repose for at any rate forty years. In fact, the only war I can recall which ended in a peace without victory and yet a permanent peace, was the war of 1812, which arose out of a comparatively trivial dispute, and ended when, with the cessation of the war in Europe, the dispute itself came to an end. The two great wars which the United States have known, the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, both ended in decisive victories. Nothing less would have satisfied either the revolted colonies or the Northern States. Everyone knows how Lincoln repudiated the idea of an inconclusive peace in the dark days of the Civil War. There never was a more crushing victory than that of the North in 1865; yet permanent peace was the outcome of that victory as of that of 1783. Whatever soreness was left behind it did not lead to other wars. On the contrary, peace was maintained, because the great questions at issue were settled in each case once for all. In short, I think it may fairly be said that the idea of establishing a permanent peace by a

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peace without victory is falsified by history and is nothing else but a delusion.

### *Conclusion.*

To sum up, I put before you this dilemma : You may have peace *now*, but it will not be a peace without victory, for it will mean victory for Germany; or you may have a peace without victory, if you mean by that phrase a return to former conditions, but it cannot be *now*, for the Germans as at present situated would not dream of allowing it. Moreover, a peace now would not be a permanent peace, for it would lead on to other wars; and the same may be said even of a peace without victory for either side. The one solution which offers any real chance of permanent peace is that embodied in the terms of the Allies. But victory, even more decisive than that which might lead to a restoration of pre-war conditions, is required to bring it about. And that is why the Allies refuse to contemplate peace at this moment, in spite of all the sufferings they have endured and have still to endure; and why they will not contemplate it until they have reduced Germany to such a condition as will make her ready to accept their terms.



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